The Vizier's Beginner Guide to AI Projects

A Narrative Introduction to Managing AI Sessions

by Dunker Fosen

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COMPANION TOOL

The **Vizier Preservation Toolkit** automates checkpoint generation, artifact tracking, and session restoration. Recommended for easier implementation of this methodology. Free and open-source. No registration, no paywalls, no gatekeeping.

Available at: https://vizier-labs.github.io/vizier-preservation-toolkit/

CHAPTER 1 — The Day the Dragon Flew Through the Backyard

Amennu's friend had been using the new intelligences for entertainment — turning family portraits into moving stories, sketching impossible animals, even making a tiny dragon swoop across his backyard in a shimmering arc of pixels.

Impressive. Amusing. A little ridiculous.
But undeniably powerful.

Amennu didn't care about dragons.
He cared about something far more serious: his remodel.

A once-in-a-lifetime project.
Walls coming down. New beams going up.
Receipts, floorplans, contractor notes, revised estimates —
and all of it already chaotic.

"If that thing can put a dragon in his yard," Amennu thought,
"surely it can help me keep track of my kitchen."

So he went straight to the person he trusted most. His brother.

The Vizier — the man who once managed irrigation systems, census records, temple construction, trade routes, and everything else that required order in a world that naturally resisted it.

"Brother," Amennu said, handing him a bundle of sketches and receipts,
"my remodel is beginning. I want to use these intelligences to keep everything organized.
But I don't know the right way to work with them. Can you show me?"

The Vizier smiled — not unkindly, but with the expression of someone who has been expecting the question for some time.

“Of course. These tools can help you, Amennu. They can help anyone.
But they do not remember on their own.
They do not stay organized unless you teach them how.”

“I will show you the short version — the beginner’s way — so your remodel goes smoothly.”

And so the Vizier began.

CHAPTER 2 — How the Intelligences Actually Work

(According to the Vizier, Who Has Seen Everything)

The Vizier led Amennu to a quiet corner of the courtyard, away from the workers hauling stone.

"You wish to use an intelligence for your remodel," he said.
"Before we begin, you must understand — briefly — how these systems think."

Amennu braced for a lecture.
Instead the Vizier offered him four simple sentences.

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1. They remember only what is in front of them.

A session is like a table.
Everything you place on it is available.
Everything you do not place on it does not exist.

"They do not remember yesterday," the Vizier said.
"That is your job."

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2. They can hold much, but not forever.

The intelligences can handle long conversations, but the table has limits.

"When the table fills," the Vizier warned,
"they begin improvising—with confidence they have not earned."

---

3. Files vanish when the session ends.

Receipts, photos, estimates, blueprints — the intelligences can read them,
but they do **not** keep them.

"If you do not save them yourself," the Vizier said,
"you may as well have thrown them into the Nile."

4. They are eager to help, yet easily confused.

If you give too many instructions at once, or switch tasks midstream,
the intelligence becomes a loyal servant carrying three trays —
and dropping all of them.

"Be kind," the Vizier said.
"Give it one job at a time."

The Vizier's Summary

Amennu wrote it down exactly as spoken:

- They forget yesterday.
- They hold much, but not endlessly.
- They lose whatever you don't save.
- They work best when you are clear.

"That is all you need to understand," the Vizier said.
"No mysteries. No equations. Just constraints."

CHAPTER 3 — How to Start a Project the Right Way

The Vizier spread Amennu's remodel sketches across the table:
the proposed doorway, two competing kitchen layouts, and a contractor receipt
containing three contradictory estimates — all marked "final."

"Before the intelligences can help," the Vizier said,
"you must learn to begin properly."

The Vizier's Rule for Starting Any Project

He raised a single finger — his signal for simplicity.

"Tell the intelligence what you're doing, what you have, and what you need."

"That's it?" Amennu asked.

"That is it."

The intelligences are powerful, but not clairvoyant.
They cannot intuit what you want unless you state it.

What to Say in Your First Message

The Vizier wrote a short list:

1. **State the project clearly.**
   "I am beginning a remodel of my home."
2. **Name the parts involved.**
   "I have plans, receipts, estimates, and photos."
3. **Say what help you want.**
   "Track decisions, compare costs, and keep everything organized."
4. **Share the timeline if it matters.**
   "This project will last several weeks."

"That is enough," the Vizier said.
"With those four lines, the intelligence will behave like a scribe instead of a poet."

Why This Matters

"If you begin vaguely," the Vizier warned,
"the intelligence will fill the gaps with enthusiasm, not accuracy."

He had seen intelligences invent entire doorways that never existed.

"Start cleanly and you will avoid that."

How Not to Begin

Never begin with:

"Help me with this."

It invites improvisation.
Improvisation invites drift.

The Vizier Demonstrates the Correct Opening

He typed:

```
I am starting a home remodel and I want you to help me keep everything
organized.

This includes:
- floorplan images
- contractor estimates
- receipts and invoices
- measurements and photos

Your role is to:
- track decisions
- summarize changes
- compare costs
- maintain a clear project record

Tell me what information you need first.
```

The intelligence responded calmly and correctly:

“Upload the floorplans and the most recent estimate.”

“That,” the Vizier said,
“is how you begin.”

CHAPTER 4 — Checkpoints: The Vizier's Only Non-Negotiable Rule

Amennu unrolled updated sketches:
a new doorway, a revised skylight cut, a reorganized alcove.

The Vizier nodded once — the nod he used before delivering something essential.

"Amennu," he said,
"you must learn the single rule that separates pleasant projects from disastrous ones."

A Checkpoint Is the Save Button These Systems Do Not Have

"A checkpoint," the Vizier said,
"is a written summary of your project's state, so the intelligence can resume work as if no time passed."

It must include:

- what you completed
- the current plan
- important decisions
- which files were used
- what comes next

No drama.
Just disciplined state-keeping.

"Think of it as how you prevent tomorrow's confusion," he added.

When to Checkpoint

The Vizier's list:

- after important decisions
- after uploading new files
- before ending a session
- whenever progress feels real
- whenever the intelligence begins drifting

"You will feel drift," he said.
"It is like talking to your cousin after too much wine."

How to Request a Checkpoint (Canonical Form)

The Vizier wrote his canonical checkpoint in large, unmistakable letters:

```
Create a checkpoint that includes:
- What we completed
- The current plan
- Important decisions
- Files we used
- What we do next
```

"Do not embellish," he warned.
"They become poetic when you let them."

How to Save the Checkpoint

When the intelligence produces it:

1. Copy the whole block.
2. Paste into a file.
3. Name it clearly, e.g.:

```
Remodel_Checkpoint_2025-02-12.txt
```

Your checkpoint + your artifacts = your project memory.
Not the model's.

Save Your Artifacts (Files the Intelligence Used)

The Vizier pointed to the floorplan, the estimate, the skylight photo.

“These matter. Save them.”

Use **clear names**:

Good:

- Kitchen_Floorplan_v2.png
- Remodel_Estimate_2025-02-10.pdf
- Skylight_Measurements_2025-02-08.jpg

Bad:

- IMG_0047.png
- newnewcontractor.pdf
- final_final_really_final.pdf

“Every clear name is a kindness to your future self.”

Put them in a folder:

```
Remodel_Artifacts_2025-02-12/
```

Restoring a Session (The Part Beginners Get Wrong)

"When you return tomorrow," the Vizier said,
"do *not* rely on the intelligence to 'remember.'
You must restore its memory."

The steps:

1. Open a **new chat**.
2. Upload your artifacts.
3. Paste the template below.
4. Paste your checkpoint as indicated in the template.
5. Say:

```
Restore this project using the summary below, which is the latest checkpoint.
Treat the checkpoint as the authoritative record for this project.
Do not invent missing context or change prior decisions unless I explicitly
say so.

After reading it:
1) Briefly restate the current project state and plan.
2) List any files or artifacts you need me to re-upload.
3) Wait for my confirmation before doing new work.

---
[checkpoint content]
---
```

The session will reconstruct itself.

CHAPTER 5 — Using the Intelligences Day by Day

With his first checkpoint complete, Amennu felt ready.

The Vizier walked him through the practical, daily ways these intelligences help — always guided by structure.

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1. Comparing Contractor Estimates

Upload the estimates.
Ask:

```
Compare these estimates.
List all price differences and what changed.
```

The intelligence responded calmly.

A checkpoint followed using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

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2. Tracking Costs Automatically

Each week, Amennu uploaded receipts.

He told the intelligence:

```
Add these receipts to the running cost summary.
Update total spending and projected remaining budget.
```

The intelligence maintained a clear table.

Checkpoint using using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

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3. Keeping a Decision Log

Use this form:

```
Record this decision:
- What changed
- Why we changed it
- What alternatives we considered
```

The intelligence maintained a clean, rolling log.

Checkpoint using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

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4. Summarizing Progress

Ask:

```
Summarize the current state:
- What's completed
- What's in progress
- What's behind schedule
- Any risks to monitor
```

The intelligence told the truth — sometimes more plainly than the contractor.

Checkpoint using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

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5. Reviewing Photos and Measurements

Upload photos.
Ask:

```
Identify any changes, issues, or measurements.
Add to the project summary.
```

NOTE: AI measurements are approximate; structural dimensions must still be verified manually.

Checkpoint using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

6. When Everything Gets Messy

On chaotic days:

```
Organize the following into:
- tasks completed
- new issues
- required decisions
- budget impacts
```

The intelligence turned chaos into order.

Checkpoint using the Vizier's checkpoint format from chapter 4.

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7. When the Intelligence Gets Something Wrong

The Vizier taught four steps:

1. State the correction plainly.
2. Restate the truth.
3. Ask it to update its records.
4. If confusion persists: restore from the checkpoint (see Chapter 4: "Restoring a Session (The Part Beginners Get Wrong)").

"Mistakes are harmless when corrected," the Vizier said.
"It is silence that causes trouble."

CHAPTER 6 — When You're Ready for More

By the time the beams were installed and the skylight argument settled,
Amennu no longer feared the intelligences.

They were tools.
Powerful ones.
But tools.

"You now possess the essential skill," the Vizier said.
"You can keep a project coherent. Everything else is optional."

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1. When Your Projects Grow Larger

You might use the intelligences to:

- manage a business
- organize a multi-month move
- draft technical reports
- analyze datasets
- consolidate many documents into one

Same habits.
Higher stakes.

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2. When You Want Repeated Tasks Automated

Simple assistants can:

- merge weekly notes
- generate summaries
- check documents for contradictions
- maintain running logs

"These are real agents," the Vizier said.
"Not mythical ones — practical ones."

3. When You Want Something That Lasts

Some use these tools for entertainment.
Some for convenience.
A few — like Amennu — build with them.

For that work, the Vizier handed him a clay tablet labeled:

The Vizier's Guide to Managing Artificial Intelligences
A deeper, technical manual.

"You now know the beginner's way," he said.
"The full path is yours when you want it."

THE VIZIER'S QUICK REFERENCE PAGE

(For when your remodel — or any project — gets busy.)

The Principles

- They forget yesterday.
- They hold much, but not endlessly.
- They lose whatever you don't save.
- They work best when you are clear.

The Method

- Start cleanly.
- One task at a time.
- Save checkpoints.
- Save your files.
- Restore properly.

The intelligences do not maintain order.
You maintain order.
The intelligence follows.

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